

IN THE CLAIMS

1. (currently amended) A vacuum pumping system ~~comprising~~ having a vacuum pumping arrangement comprising:
 - a drive shaft;
 - a motor for driving ~~said~~ the drive shaft;
 - a molecular pumping mechanism comprising turbomolecular pumping means; and
 - a backing pumping mechanism, wherein ~~said~~ the drive shaft is for driving ~~said~~ the molecular pumping mechanism and ~~said~~ the backing pumping mechanism; and~~an~~ the system comprises evacuation means for evacuating at least ~~said~~ the turbomolecular pumping means.
2. (currently amended) ~~A~~ The system as claimed in claim 1, wherein the vacuum pumping arrangement forms part of a semiconductor processing assembly and ~~said~~ the evacuation means comprises a pump associated with ~~said~~ the semiconductor processing assembly.
3. (currently amended) ~~A~~ The system as claimed in claim 2, wherein ~~said~~ the pump is a pump for a load lock chamber of the semiconductor processing assembly.
4. (currently amended) The ~~A~~ system as claimed in claim 1, wherein ~~said~~ the evacuation means comprises an ejector pump.
5. (currently amended) The ~~A~~ system as claimed in ~~any one of claims 1 to 4~~, wherein the backing pumping mechanism comprises a regenerative pumping mechanism.
6. (currently amended) The ~~A~~ system as claimed in ~~any one of the preceding claims 1~~, wherein ~~said~~ the molecular pumping mechanism comprises molecular drag pumping ~~means~~ mechanism.
7. (currently amended) The ~~A~~ system as claimed in ~~any one of the preceding claims 1~~, wherein ~~said~~ the evacuation means is for evacuating the vacuum pumping arrangement.

8. (currently amended) A method of operating a vacuum pumping arrangement ~~comprising~~having a drive shaft; a motor for driving ~~said~~the drive shaft; a molecular pumping mechanism ~~comprising~~having turbomolecular pumping means; and a backing pumping mechanism, ~~wherein said~~the drive shaft ~~being~~is for driving ~~said~~the molecular pumping mechanism and ~~said~~the backing pumping mechanism, the method comprising the steps of operating an evacuation means connected to the arrangement to evacuate ~~at least~~the turbomolecular pumping means to a predetermined pressure; and operating the motor to start rotation of the drive shaft.

9. (currently amended) ~~The~~A method as claimed in claim 8, wherein the motor is ~~operated to start rotation of~~rotates the drive shaft when ~~said~~the predetermined pressure has been attained.

10. (currently amended) ~~The~~A method as claimed in claim 8, ~~wherein the method comprises~~further comprising the steps of starting the motor before or during ~~evacuating~~evacuation of ~~said at least~~the turbomolecular pumping means to ~~said~~the predetermined pressure; ~~and~~limiting the torque of the motor to prevent overloading before evacuation; and ~~the step of~~operating the evacuation means to evacuate at least the turbomolecular pumping means to ~~said~~the predetermined pressure.

11. (currently amended) ~~The~~A method as claimed in ~~any one of~~claims 8 to 10, wherein the vacuum pumping arrangement forms part of a semiconductor processing assembly having a pump associated therewith which forms ~~said~~the evacuation means, ~~and the method comprises~~further comprising the steps of connecting the pump to the arrangement and operating the pump to evacuate at least the turbomolecular pumping means to ~~said~~the predetermined pressure.

12. (currently amended) ~~The~~A method as claimed in ~~any one of~~claims 8 to 10, wherein the evacuation means comprises an ejector pump ~~and the method comprises~~further comprising the steps of connecting ~~said~~the ejector pump to the arrangement; and operating the ejector pump to evacuate at least the turbomolecular pumping means to ~~said~~the predetermined pressure.

13. (currently amended) TheA method as claimed in ~~any one of~~ claims 8 to 12, wherein ~~said~~the vacuum pumping arrangement is evacuated to ~~said~~the predetermined pressure.
14. (currently amended) TheA method as claimed in ~~any one of~~ claims 8 to 13, wherein ~~said~~the predetermined pressure is 500 mbar or less.
15. (new) The system as claimed in claim 5, wherein the molecular pumping mechanism comprises molecular drag pumping mechanism.
16. (new) The system as claimed in claim 4, wherein the evacuation means is for evacuating the vacuum pumping arrangement.
17. (new) The method as claimed in claim 13, wherein the predetermined pressure is 500 mbar or less.